

The following information was compiled by Fred Boyd, Community Planner, with the Montgomery County Planning Department. Mr. Boyd has been working with the Town on developing the Kensington and Vicinity Sector Plan since day one. This information is intended to help clarify any concerns or questions that you may have with regards to the proposed Sector Plan; specifically, the Planning Department would like to clarify a number of fliers that have been circulating around town..

Mr. Boyd is available to discuss any questions or concerns with the following information or with the Kensington and Vicinity Sector Plan as a whole.

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Proposed within the Kensington and Vicinity Sector Plan Draft
All figures and illustration MNCPPC or County Fiscal Impact analysis.

- 500 – 1,400 apartments • 980 – 2,880 new residents • 59 – 161 new schoolchildren [MCPS]

The dwelling unit numbers cited in the flyer—500-1400 units—are from a comparison table prepared in 2010 for Council staff use at a PHED committee worksession during the initial review of the Sector Plan. The table provided an idea of the maximum development permitted by zoning for 15 properties under existing and recommended zones. *For the CR zones, such an estimate is necessarily speculative, because the zone is designed to allow individual landowners to determine an appropriate mix of residential and non-residential uses under the umbrella of an overall maximum floor area ratio.* Development yields are influenced by many factors, including the size and configuration of a lot, topography, type of development and economic considerations. In addition, there is no indication that all 15 properties will develop during the life of this Sector Plan, and no indication that any given landowner will pursue or achieve maximum allowable density. *Use of these numbers without the additional explanation is misleading.*

Stated figures for new residents and school children are from the County's Economic Development Fund Fiscal Impact Model. We got similar estimates of school enrollment from MCPS; we have never done an estimate of new residents, but the caveats described for estimates of new units apply equally to estimates of new residents.

- 75-foot building heights (5 feet taller than 10400 building at Connecticut/Knowles) and 60-foot heights throughout commercial Kensington (50-foot on Antique Row) – urban increase in density

Density is best articulated through floor area ratio or units per acre; allowable building heights are perhaps better viewed as one of several ways to achieve design objectives—bulk and massing in particular—as well as other policy or planning objectives, like provision of open space or parking facilities. The Plan proposes 75-foot building heights in two places: around the intersection of Connecticut and Knowles avenues, where there are currently two buildings approaching this height, and in one portion of the Connecticut Avenue-Plyers Mill Road intersection. The height recommendations are designed to enable varied height and massing for projects at those locations; we do not want, nor do we expect, monolithic, single height buildings, and the proposed design guidelines say so in precisely those terms.

Our Plans in White Flint and Wheaton propose floor area ratios of 4 to 6. In my view, these densities—rather than the floor area ratios of 1.5 to 2.5 in Kensington—are “urban.”

- No traffic fixes prior to building at “failed” Connecticut/Knowles/Plyers Mill intersections [MCDOT]

This may be a reference to an observation in the Department of Transportation’s memorandum included in the Executive’s comments. (I will note that the Executive provided the original 2009 review of the Sector Plan, with a cover memorandum dated September 13, 2011. The Executive Branch did not do a new review of the revised Plan.) That comment suggests that no critical lane volume analysis was done for the Kensington Sector Plan. The Plan Appendix, which I believe was available to the Executive Branch, contains that analysis. (It is on pages 48 to 58 of the Appendix. The Sector Plan (p 8) refers readers to the Appendix for details of the analysis.) The Sector Plan includes the extension of Summit Avenue as its primary roadway network improvement, acknowledges that this improvement will improve conditions at the Connecticut/Knowles intersection and indicates that congestion will continue slightly to exceed existing standards. It appears that there is a more fundamental disagreement here: We believe that congestion levels slightly above standards can continue to indicate land use-transportation balance, and we say so in the Sector Plan; it appears, from the Executive’s comments that the Department of Transportation does not.

The Appendix also includes a detailed discussion of traffic volumes. The two traffic volume figures that I understand were used at the September 28 meeting are average *daily* traffic figures at *in both directions at eight separate locations*. These figures are based on future development recommended in the Sector Plan *as well as “through” traffic*.

- No Metro. Developers receive higher density through reduced parking for “transit proximity” to MARC

The CR zones currently allow density incentives for transit proximity, based on the type of mass transit available and the distance from a project to an existing or proposed station. These incentives *are not in addition to allowable density; they can be used to achieve a portion of the density allowed in the individual zone*. These incentives are also only one of six categories of public benefits to be used in the zones. Separately, parking requirements in the zones are also based on transit proximity, with projects required to provide a percentage of the parking required for a given use in the parking section of the zoning ordinance, based on distance from a transit station. The current revisions to the CR zones propose the following parking standards:

CRN residential: 80 percent of zoning ordinance requirements for properties up to a half mile from transit as a minimum requirement; no maximum; 100 percent of zoning ordinance requirements for properties more than a half mile from transit as a minimum requirement; no maximum

CRN retail and restaurant: four parking spaces per 1,000 square feet as a minimum; no maximum (applies to all properties regardless of distance from transit)

CRN other non-residential uses: 80 percent of zoning ordinance requirements for properties up to a half mile from transit as a minimum requirement; 100 percent of ordinance requirements as a maximum; 100 percent of zoning ordinance requirement for properties more than a half mile from transit; no maximum

CRT residential: 70 percent of ordinance requirements for properties up to a half mile from transit as a minimum requirement; 100 percent of ordinance requirements as a maximum; 80 percent of ordinance requirements for properties greater than a half mile from transit as a maximum requirement; no maximum

CRT retail and restaurant: four parking spaces per 1,000 square feet as a minimum; no maximum (applies to all properties regardless of distance from transit)

CRT other non-residential uses: 60 percent of zoning ordinance requirements for properties up to a half mile from transit as a minimum requirement; 100 percent of ordinance requirements as a maximum; 80 percent of zoning ordinance requirements for properties more than a half mile from transit as a minimum requirement; no maximum

Under proposed revisions to the CR zones now under review, a new zone, CRN (neighborhood) would eliminate density incentives based on transit proximity. The same proposal would increase the required parking percentage in some

cases, while retaining the concept of basing required parking on proximity to transit services.

- Many properties could be built “by right” without public review by the Town or County

It is true that some standard method redevelopment projects on small, already-recorded lots would need no regulatory review, and it is also true that there are a significant number of small, already-recorded lots in Kensington. I do not believe that there is significant benefit to an extensive and expensive regulatory review of a proposal to put an additional floor on an existing one-story warehouse on a 5,000 square foot lot so that the owner (a cabinetmaker, for example) could live on the new floor. I believe that, given ownership patterns and lot sizes in Kensington, most redevelopment initiatives in many parts of town (on Summit Avenue, north of Knowles, for example, or on Metropolitan Avenue) would fit that description. And I believe that Kensington will benefit from this kind of redevelopment.

- Design Guidelines are weakened, advisory-only, and legally unenforceable

Section 59-C-15.61 of the Zoning Ordinance states that “Development that requires a site plan must be substantially consistent with the applicable master or sector plan and any design guidelines approved by the Planning Board that implement the applicable plan.” I strongly believe that, over the life of the Sector Plan, important redevelopment projects—Konterra, Burka, 3700 Plyers Mill Road, Johnson’s—will be optional method projects that will have to conform to the Sector Plan recommendations and to the design guidelines. Smaller scale projects on individual properties—even if they do not undergo site plan review—will meet the Sector Plan’s overall goals and enhance the Town Center’s character and attractiveness.